

(68)

15 August 1974

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: The Prospects for the Karamanlis Government

1. Karamanlis' position at the moment is strengthened by several factors.

- He did not ask for the job; he was requested by a consensus of military and civilian leaders to become Prime Minister, a move that was popularly received by the Greek citizenry.
- He cannot be faulted for the reverses Greek Cypriots are now suffering. This setback is attributed to the former junta.
- He can be excused for not taking a tougher military posture against Turkey because his senior military officers are advising him to avoid broadening the confrontation.
- His return to power has been applauded by Western Europe and well received by Greeks who resented their international isolation under the old junta. It is assumed by many Greeks that the West will be sympathetic to a Karamanlis government in future international negotiations on Greek-Turkey disputes. This is an important factor in view of Athen's recognition of Turkey's military superiority.
- In Greece's present difficulties, no alternative contender -- military or civilian -- would command anything like Karamanlis' support, and few would be anxious to try.

2. Greek public opinion is fickle, however, and many of the advantages Karamanlis has now will gradually fade.

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3. Karamanlis could of course get in trouble over the terms of the Cyprus settlement. Even though the Cyprus disaster is not of his making, he will be forever associated with its resolution. Karamanlis is sensitive to this problem and will insist that the language be such as to minimize Greek humiliation. (This accounted for Athen's preference at Geneva for a "cantonal" rather than a "federal" solution.) Of course Karamanlis will not feel obligated to press for anything more than what the Greek Cypriots can settle for, and this may ease his problem somewhat.

4. Once the present confrontation with Turkey has subsided, Karamanlis' honeymoon with a wide constituency probably will not endure. The sense of national unity apparent during the crisis will give way to Greek political forces that are historically divisive. Extreme opinion, such as that represented by leftist Andreas Papandreou, could create chaotic conditions that would lead to a crisis. Karamanlis will be hard pressed to keep the military assured that he can maintain order while at the same time restoring sufficient civil liberties and representative government to satisfy the general populace.

5. If Karamanlis ran into serious trouble, he probably would resign before being ousted. Two contingencies might lead to his departure. His decision could be triggered early if he faced what he considered a completely unacceptable Cyprus solution or later if he felt unable to carry out essential elements of his domestic program.

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6. Even if Karamanlis steps down in the next few months there would be considerable sentiment to continue a civilian government. The botch the military has made of Greek affairs during the past seven years would still be fresh in the public's mind. There would be no assurance, however, that the civilian replacement would be able to cope with the issues that caused the departure of Karamanlis.

7. If the Greek political arena becomes badly fragmented to the extent that civilians seem unable to govern, the military would take over once again. In the first instance, this might be a takeover by the senior military. It seems somewhat more likely, however, that officers of junior and middle level rank would seize power. There is considerable evidence that younger officers are dissatisfied with the performance of their superiors during the past seven years and they might not tolerate another takeover by the generals.

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